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Telecommunications Committee, 2003

Report of the Telecommunications Committee

April 28, 2003

The Telecommunications Committee was formed by the action of the 1997 Special Town Meeting. It includes a member of the Planning Department, a member of the Redevelopment Board, two residents with telecommunications experience, one attorney and two citizens with demonstrated interest in open spaces and/or historic buildings.

The committee's goal is to investigate regulations pertaining to wireless communications antenna configurations in the town, evaluate the potential for licensing or leasing antenna sites and make recommendations pursuant to changes to the Arlington bylaws.

Meetings were held periodically in the first three years. They were open to the public and meeting times are announced in the local media. Over the past two years, no meetings were held since the definition of the committee's role has suggested little need to discuss new technologies in the wireless world that would affect large or free standing antenna sites.

Some of the actions by the committee:

1. Reviewed the current Arlington bylaw pertaining to antenna sites.
2. Ascertained whether any of the bylaws of several cities and towns pertaining to wireless antenna locations should be adopted.
3. Reviewed determinations made by the Arlington Redevelopment Board on applications for antenna sites for compliance with existing bylaws.
4. Examined the ongoing trends in the wireless telecommunications industry and studied the current state of the art.
5. Discussed the impact of antenna towers and equipment sites in residential areas pertaining to aesthetics, noise, safety and convenience.

Over the past few years a new trend has emerged in the wireless communications arena, which significantly reduces the need for large antenna installations. The impact of Federal Communications Commission regulations pertaining to rule 802.11B or Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity), authorizes the expansion of small, high-speed, low-power systems which have minimal Report of the Telecommunications Committee effect on the environment or aesthetics. Typical system base stations are about the size of lunchbox and utilize a single or dual antenna that is only a few inches in length. They are designed to provide reliable wireless communications in an area typically no larger than a football field.

The explosion of hand held wireless cell phones, over the air connected laptop computers and PDA's has promoted a comparable growth of Wi-Fi antenna sites at airports, hotels, office

buildings and even coffee shops. These transmitter locations provide high speed access to the internet and allow users to communicate almost anywhere without the necessity of reaching cell site antenna towers.

It is true that there will continue to be an occasional request to install roof top antennas to supplement an existing network by one of the major wireless suppliers. However, the town has the protection of its bylaws including a mandated review and hearing by the Arlington Redevelopment Board for any application for a new site.

As a result of the current status of wireless needs and the review process by the ARB, the committee has determined that the current Arlington bylaw is appropriate for both types of wireless communications systems and for the Town. Therefore, no further action is required of the Telecommunications Committee.

The telecommunications industry remains a dynamic and fluid entity with new and exciting services being introduced on a continuing basis. The committee believes that should there be a major impact in the quality of life in our town due to events in the wireless world, then an effort may be in order to determine the impact of such activity.

Respectfully,

Roland E. Chaput, Chairman, Arlington Redevelopment Board
Alan McClennen, Director of Planning
John A. Fitzmaurice, resident
Philip J. McCarthy, resident
Freeland K Abbott, resident
Bernice K. Jones, resident
Jodi B. Wallo, resident